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Stolen Property and Its Redistribution In the Metropolitan Vancouver Region (1976)

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STOLEN PROPERTY AND ITS REDISTRIBUTION IN THE METROPOLITAN VANCOUVER REGION (1976)

A REPORT PREPARED FOR THE

CO-ORDINATED LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT

MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

BY

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FOREWORD

During 1976 a University of Victoria professor conducted a survey[1] designed to assess British Columbians' attitudes and experiences with organized criminal activities. The replies revealed that from a list of sixteen unlawful activities more respondents were personally knowledgeable of the sale of stolen merchandise than of anything else, including drug trafficking.

It seemed, therefore, both timely and appropriate that the Co-ordinated Law Enforcement Unit (C.L.E.U.), Policy Analysis Division, should initiate a project in the Spring of 1976 with the intention of determining the nature of the fencing market existing in the Metropolitan Vancouver region comprising the following communities:

	Name	Population 1976*
1.	Vancouver City	396,563
2.	Burnaby District Municipality	129,845
3.	Surrey District Municipality	114,650
4.	North Vancouver City and District Municipality	93,685
5.	Port Coquitlam City and Coquitlam District Municipality	77,907
6.	Richmond District Municipality	76,379
7.	Delta District Municipality	62,550
8.	New Westminster City	37,171
9.	West Vancouver District Municipality	36,471
10.	Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows District Municipality	27,247
11.	Langley City and District Municipality	26,620
12.	Port Moody City	11,515
	TOTAL:	1,090,603

*Statistics Canada, 1976 Census
Population - Preliminary Counts

[1]Dr. Daniel J. Koenig, University of Victoria, Victoria, B. C., Organized Criminal Activities in B. C.: Analysis of Survey Findings, September 1976.

The study relied heavily on the co-operation and assistance of members of the twelve respective police departments, the Vancouver Integrated Intelligence Unit and the National Harbours Board Police. The author is particularly indebted to those detectives who gave so generously of their time and knowledge in the completion of fence questionnaire forms. Without their direct assistance the identification and collection of data would have taken considerably longer and been less comprehensive. Probably by virtue of being a retired member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and a security-cleared employee of the Co-ordinated Law Enforcement Unit, the author was favoured with complete openness and trust both verbally and in access to classified files, for which he extends sincere appreciation.

A debt of gratitude must also be expressed to Dr. M. E. Walsh, Research Scientist, Battelle Law and Justice Study Center, Seattle, Washington, one of America's top authorities of fencing, for allowing use of her research methodology and report format, as the basis for this project. Without that guidance, the job would have been much more difficult and the results less impressive.

I. INTRODUCTION

Economists and researchers call it redistribution of stolen property, but the police, the lawbreaker, and the man on the street call it "fencing".

The fence buys goods from the thief and returns them to the marketplace in many different ways. His particular operation is as variable as his sources of supply, the articles stolen, and his clients.

Fencing is an intangible but essential link in a network that makes burglary, car prowling, shoplifting and other crimes against property, pay off. For generations, that intangibility has protected fences from both police and public attention.

Fencing is a high-profit service crime not found in the Criminal Code of Canada. Whether the police apprehend a member of the general public with a stolen coloured television set purchased from a businessman-fence, or whether they apprehend the fence himself with a warehouse full of stolen goods, both are charged with the same offense - "possession of stolen property".

Statistics of the Vancouver Police Department for 1975 showed that the value of reported property losses incurred only through burglaries, car prowls and general thefts exceeded $6,900,000.[2]

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[2]This figure includes cash, bicycles and motorcycles. It does not include cars or trucks or property where the police report failed to state the value. Statistics kindly supplied by Mr. Norman Holland, Vancouver P.D. Statistician.

Based on a more restricted criteria as explained in the next section, this C.L.E.U. research project determined that the value of reported stolen property suitable for fencing, for the twelve communities listed in the "Foreword" would exceed nine million dollars annually. Most of this stolen property was undoubtedly sold to fences at between 10 to 25 percent of the retail value, and usually in the lower range.[3]

Based upon indicators such as type of crime, method of operation, property stolen, physical evidence left at the scene, persons convicted, persons suspected or arrested but not convicted, detectives of the twelve participating police departments were unanimous in claiming that males under the age of 25 years are responsible for a very high percentage of the burglaries, car prowls and general thefts in the Metropolitan Vancouver region. In support of this claim the B. C. Police Commission Bulletin No. 3 dated September 1976 stated that juveniles (i.e. persons under age 17 years) are forming a gradually increasing proportion of persons charged and the day seems not far off when juveniles will form two-thirds of identified offenders coming to the attention of the police. A recent study[4] conducted by the Vancouver City Police reached the conclusion that of the 4,663 residential burglaries reported in

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[3] Executive Summary, The Design of Anti-Fencing Strategies, Colorado State University, College of Business, Colorado, U.S.A., December 1975, p. 14.

[4] Leon Bourque, The Inadequacies of the Present Juvenile Justice System, Vancouver, British Columbia, October 23, 1976.

Vancouver for 1975, there was an estimated juvenile involvement of 75 percent. Some of the probable influencing factors are as follows:

1. High Ratio of Young Males

In 1976, Metropolitan Vancouver's population was comprised of 28.8 percent of persons in the 15 to 29 age range. Based upon a gross population of 1,090,603 this age group would constitute 314,094 individuals, of which very close to fifty percent, or 157,047 would be males.

2. High Unemployment of Young Males

(a) As of April 17, 1976, there were 29,800 males in the 15 to 24 age range unemployed in British Columbia. The actual unemployment rate for both sexes of this group was 17.5 percent and compared unfavourably to the national average of 12.8 percent.[5]

(b) As of July 17, 1976 there were 33,500 males in the 15 to 24 age range unemployed in British Columbia. The actual unemployment rate for both sexes of this group was 15.8 percent and compared unfavourably to the national average of 13.3 percent.[6]

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[5] British Columbia, Department of Labour, Labour Research Bulletin, May 1976. The male unemployment figure stated in 2(a) was based upon the fact that 62.2 percent of British Columbia's labour force are male and, as of April 17, 1976, there were 48,000 persons of both sexes looking for work.

[6] Ibid, August 1976. The male unemployment figure stated in 2(b) was based upon the fact that 62.2 percent of British Columbia's labour force are male and, as of July 17, 1976, there were 54,000 persons of both sexes looking for work.

3. Large Drug Addict Population

Approximately 7,500 cannabis/heroin addicts, representing fifty percent of Canada's drug addict population, reside in the Metropolitan Vancouver region. Although no reliable figures are available it is a recognized fact that a significant portion of the heroin addict population must resort to unlawful activities to acquire enough money to support their habit.

4. Insufficient Police Resources

According to the British Columbia Police Commission Bulletin No. 3 dated September 1976:

- British Columbia has the worst crime rate of any province in Canada.
- British Columbia burdens its constables with the highest caseload per member than of all other provinces in Canada.
- Due to the existing levels of police manpower and deployment, the police do not have the time to enquire fully into every crime reported to them. Consequently, fewer than one out of three crimes are solved, and the clearance rate, that is, the proportion of crimes known to police which are cleared by means of an arrest or by some other satisfactory solution, is less than fifty percent, the lowest of any province in Canada.

5. Inadequacies of the British Columbia Juvenile Justice System

Evidence of this problem has been amply provided in

newspaper articles[7] and in a well researched report[8] prepared for the Chief Constable of the Vancouver City Police by Detective Leon Bourque, who specialized in youth-related crime and was a former member of the Youth Squad. Some of the weaknesses are as follows:

- When a juvenile is arrested for a crime he cannot be held in custody unless the crime is a very serious one.
- Juveniles are not held responsible or accountable for their actions. There are no serious penalties or consequences for juveniles who commit unlawful offences.
- Juveniles with repeated convictions are made wards of the Superintendent of Child Welfare and police estimate that there are up to two hundred hard-core delinquents in the Vancouver area.
- These wards of the government can be placed in foster homes, group homes or treatment centres, but they are insecure and residents can walk away from them at any time. Secure facilities

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[7] "Juvenile Crime Wave Swamping B. C. - A Million Dollar Problem", The Victoria Times, September 2, 1976, p. 40; "Crime Rate Worse Here But Picture Brightening", The Province, September 17, 1976.

[8] Leon Bourque, The Inadequacies of the Present Juvenile Justice System, Vancouver, British Columbia, October 23, 1976.

for the confinement of dangerous juvenile offenders do not exist.*

- Because very little use is made of Section 22(1) of the Juvenile Delinquents Act, parents are not held responsible or accountable for allowing their children to commit crimes.
- Trials of juvenile offenders are held in closed court and without publicity, in compliance with Section 12(1) of the Juvenile Delinquents Act.
- Although the Attorney General has the authority to raise a juvenile to adult court to stand trial, his consent was given only once in the two years preceding the date of the newspaper article.

Based on the indicators that over 90 percent of burglaries, car-prowls and general thefts are committed by drug addicts and petty criminals for the purpose of converting stolen goods to cash through a fence, then a proportionate decrease in these types of offences would result if fences were made less numerous and accessible through constant police attention.

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*Note: In September 1976 the British Columbia Corrections Branch submitted a confidential report[9] to the Attorney General recommending a $4.3 million project to provide three types of special detention facilities for juvenile delinquents and a positive reaction to its implementation has resultd.

[9] Harvey Oberfeld, "$4.3 Million Projected for Juvenile Facilities", Vancouver Sun, September 2, 1976, p.1.

The following relevant paragraphs found in a report[10] serve to emphasize the key role filled by the fence in the criminal community.

> "Although there is little systematic evidence available on the means by which stolen property is disposed of, there is both anecdotal and descriptive material available, as well as consensus among burglars, police, and scientists, that conversion is the single most important element in the cycle. There are a variety of routes through which the burglar disposes of his stolen goods, ranging from the "square-john"man-on-the-street who purchases, say, a colour television at an abnormally low price even though he suspects that the item has been stolen, to the professional fence who purchases large quantities of stolen goods in order to supplement his legitimate business, or, in some cases, to operate a business entirely based on the sale of stolen goods.
>
> To almost all burglars, a trustworthy fence is the key to a successful burglary operation. The fence provides the burglar with an outlet for stolen goods, a source of credit, and a link to the straight world. Furthermore, by having a reliable way to dispose of stolen goods immediately, the professional thief avoids the pitfall, common to novice thieves, of being caught with hot items in his possession because he lacks a place to dispose of them quickly. (Barnes, 1971)
>
> Specifics of relationships between particular fences and particular burglars vary. Thus a drug addict, desperate for a fix, may sell his goods at an extraordinarily low percentage of street values whereas a more highly skilled burglar,

[10] United States, Department of Justice, Patterns of Burglary, second edition, June 1973.

> well-trained in the art of bargaining, and not driven by drug-induced cravings, will often use more than one fence as an outlet for his goods, and thereby, both increase his bargaining position, and avoid the danger of the loss of an entire haul in the event that any one fence is caught. (Pileggi, 1968)....
>
> When discussing criminal behaviour with the Beltway Gang, one area where no information of any kind would be revealed was that of fences, their description and kinds. For, from the information we were able to gather, it became clear that the fence is to the burglar banker, mother-confessor, sleeping place in time of trial, and magic converter of goods into money. In addition, fences typically function as sources of intelligence on potentially low-risk, lucrative jobs. Because a fence is alleged to be, in many instances, a legitimate businessman, he is quite frequently because of his trade in a position to turn odd and otherwise not easily disposable loot from particular kinds of burglaries into lucrative thefts. Thus, the fence looms as the essential element in the burglary cycle..."

Fences indirectly cost commercial industry millions of dollars annually through cargo theft, shoplifting, illegal competition, payment of insurance claims, etc. but in the final analysis it is the general public which pays in higher prices for goods purchased.

In a report,[11] the result of a special United States Senate Committee which conducted hearings on criminal fencing systems and their economic impact on small business,

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[11] United States Senate, Hearings Before the Select Committee on Small Business, Criminal Redistribution Systems and Their Economic Impact on Small Business: Criminal Redistribution (Fencing) Systems, Ninety-Third Congress, First Session, May 1 and 2, 1973, Part 2 (Appendix), p. 445.

the following statement appears:

> "Your committee has found that organized crime - specifically, fencing - is an integral part of most major cargo theft. Your committee's report on criminal redistribution systems made the following assumptions:
>
> First, fences play a vital role in the successful completion of a crime involving a major theft. Without the fence, the theft is a meaningless act.
>
> Second, stolen goods eventually reach a legitimate marketplace. The magnitude of theft is so great that the only reasonable outlet must be to legitimate consumers.
>
> Third, the illegal distribution system from the thief to the marketplace must adversely affect legitimate business enterprises such as storage companies, transporters, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, lending institutions, and others who normally are involved in a legal distribution system.
>
> The logic that follows is that whether the theft and distribution process takes place interstate, intrastate, intracity, or even intracommunity, the detrimental effects on legitimate business and commerce have national ramifications."

Although the foregoing conclusion was reached by an American Senate Committee, in view of the similarity between the financial, economic and transportation systems of the two countries, it is likely that the same type of "detrimental effects on legitimate business" are being caused in Canada by professional thieves and fences.

During the initial stages of this project while conducting a literature survey of fencing, it was discovered

that in comparison to other types of lawbreakers the fence has been a neglected subject for research by criminologists, legal scholars, and writers in general. Enquiries at the following potential sources for any kind of published material on the subject of fencing stolen property produced negative results:

- British Columbia Ministry of the Attorney-General
- British Columbia Legislative Library
- Victoria Court House Library
- Victoria Public Library
- Oak Bay Public Library
- MacPherson Library, University of Victoria
- Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police
- Metropolitan Toronto Police
- R.C.M. Police British Columbia Headquarters
- City of Vancouver Police Department

Consequently, any books, research papers, field studies, and other material subsequently acquired were from American sources.

In the early stages of collecting information on fences it became apparent that in addition to facilitating the needs of this research project, the data could be compiled into a catalogue of 154 known and alleged fences for police operational purposes. This catalogue was distributed to the twelve contributing police departments in October 1976.

Question 12 on the fence description form (Appendix "A") asked if the subject was known to regularly transport stolen property to other areas, and if so, what was believed to be the reason. This question proved to be impractical and was subsequently dropped because it was learned that peculiar circumstances related to type of goods, existing local conditions, distance to better markets, and so on all had an influence on the fence's decision as to where he would sell various goods.

On the stolen property logging form (Appendix "B") the least productive column was headed "suspects." From answers in this column it was hoped to develop some reliable impressions as to the approximate percentage of burglaries and thefts being performed by various categories of persons such as juveniles, drug addicts, opportunists, semiskilled, insiders, and professionals. Unless the culprit was seen by the victim or caught, the police incident report usually remarked "no suspects." Sometimes the nature of the goods taken indicated the probable category of the perpetrator, but this method was too unreliable to be of any value. Further comments in this regard are contained elsewhere in this report.

Limitation

It should be noted that this report does not represent an all-inclusive picture of the theft scene for the Metropolitan Vancouver region. The incidence of shoplifting reflected by police reports represents only a small fraction

of the total problem. Cars, trucks, vans and bicycles were excluded because of their high recovery rate. Theft and pilferage of in-transit or in-storage cargo caused by employees of warehousing, stevedoring and transportation companies was not covered because such losses are infrequently reported to local police. Thefts of gasoline from self-serve stations and licence plates off vehicles were also excluded. Robberies were omitted because of their different character and lack of relationship to fencing.

II. THE METROPOLITAN VANCOUVER REGION THEFT SCENE

A Note About Data and Methodology

When preparing to conduct a similar study for the Seattle Metropolitan area, Dr. M. E. Walsh surmised that "in order to get some feel for the type of redistribution mechanisms operating locally, it was thought to be important to know just what goods the production side of the theft industry thieves were generating. This was because the nature of theft could be expected to yield a good preliminary picture of the nature of fencing."[12]

In this instance, however, a two step process was not followed, for all the data on both sides of the industry (i.e. acquisition via theft, and distribution via fences) was collected before any analysis was done. Therefore, analysis of the theft information was used as a validating tool to check the "fit" or compatibility with the fencing market as revealed through analysis of all data collected in that regard.

Although data on both thefts and fences was collected during the same visits to the twelve participating municipal police departments, for the sake of clarity we will divide the explanation into the two appropriate sections of this report.

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[12] M. E. Walsh, Stolen Property and Its Redistribution in the Seattle Metropolitan Area, Battelle Law and Justice Study Center, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., February 1975.

As a means of achieving paragraph one above, all available police incident reports related to actual and attempted burglaries, car prowls, shoplifts and general thefts for the week of April 22-28, 1976 were read and the information manually logged under the headings of type of incident, method used, property stolen, estimated value, degree of identification (by victim) and category of suspects (seven choices).[13] This step was later repeated covering the week of July 8-14, 1976.

There was nothing systematic in the selection of these weeks, except for their timing in the course of the research project. They did, however, fulfill their purpose of orienting the researcher to the nature of theft in Metro Vancouver within the mentioned limitations and of serving as a check on the fencing scene to be described later. As stated in the "Introduction" section of this report, thefts of licence plates, gasoline, bicycles, and all types of motor vehicles except motorcycles were excluded, EXCEPT where they occurred in direct conjunction with a burglary.

A. TWO WEEKS OF REPORTED THEFT

As mentioned earlier hundreds of police reports covering all known thefts and burglaries for the periods April 22-28 and July 8-14, 1976 were carefully read and logged. These reports were submitted by the policemen who responded to the initial complaint.

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[13] See Appendix "B"

Processing these reports left four main impressions:

1. The high degree to which victims contribute to their own misfortune, particularly by such actions as leaving purses, leather coats, etc. unattended in a public place; leaving doors/windows of their residence unlocked or open while they are absent; and, treating a locked car as if it were a secure place by leaving cameras, purses, briefcases, and similar items in plain view on the seat.
2. Only a very small percentage of thefts or burglaries are being performed by professional criminals. The great majority appear to be the work of persons of limited expertise, probably in the 15 to 24 age range.
3. The adverse effect on the victim is greater than the monetary loss of his property or damage to his premises. In addition to the resulting inconvenience with the police, insurance company, etc. goods stolen frequently have an irreplaceable sentimental value. The invasion of his property by a stranger also undermines the victim's normal sense of security.
4. The frustration of police in being unable to give complaints their justified investigative attention because of the continuous volume of new cases reported day after day.

The first question to which the researcher addressed himself was: What was the approximate monetary value of property stolen in 1976 in the Metropolitan Vancouver

region through burglaries, car prowls and general theft as indicated by the losses reported to the local municipal police during the two sample weeks? Excluded were shoplifting and thefts of cash, credit cards, bicycles, cars, trucks, motorhomes, licence plates and gasoline. Where the theft involved a wallet or purse and cash contents the sum of ten dollars was allowed for the receptical only. After determining the total value of stolen property for each week, the average of the two weeks was multiplied by fifty-two and produced the annual loss figure of $9,065,732. The true figure would probably be closer to ten million dollars because (a) the author was not able to log 100 percent of the police reports submitted during the two sample weeks as some could not be located and others were still in the possession of the investigating officer, (b) some reports did not state the cash value of property stolen, (c) follow-up reports promised to police by victims were not submitted, or not attached to the related initial report, and (d) not all losses are reported to police.

Next, Metro Vancouver's theft was analyzed in terms of proportion to each type of event occurring in a week. Table 1 summarizes this information for the two sample weeks. Leading by a wide margin, general theft is the most frequent occurrence. This group includes thefts by diversion, substitution, pickpocketing, and so on which requires some skill, as well as thefts that require little or no skill. To give a few examples this latter category

TABLE 1

Frequency of Reported Theft Events

By Type of Crime

Type of Crime	No. of Events for Week Ending Apr. 28	No. of Events for Week Ending July 14
General Thefts	260	305
Car Prowls (Thefts from Interior of Vehicle)	195	192
Residential Burglaries	178	154
Shoplifts	80	49
Commercial Burglaries	68	57
Institutional Burglaries	32	18
Attempts		
Residential Burglaries	22	8
Commercial Burglaries	3	9
General Thefts	5	3
Car Prowls (Interior)	3	2
Institutional Burglaries	0	0

included:

- thefts of opportunity such as unattended purses, wallets, sports equipment or clothing;
- thefts of lumber, building materials, and tools from unguarded construction sites or commercial storage yards;
- thefts of lawnmowers, shrubbery, garden ornaments, and other miscellaneous items from residential property or unlocked garages and storage sheds;
- thefts from lockers in apartment buildings, arenas, and schools;
- thefts of or from unattended boats or yachts.

The largest single general theft was a commercial trailer with a load of sheet steel valued at $12,900. The empty trailer was found abandoned. Of the general theft

category 81 events (30 percent) in the first week, and 92 events (43 percent) in the second week involved thefts of wheels, batteries, engine parts, and similar items from the exterior of motor vehicles.

The next most frequent category was car prowls with an average of twenty-eight report daily. This figure covers thefts from only the interior of motor vehicles and includes built-in equipment such as AM-FM radios, tape decks, seats, citizens' band mobile radios, as well as purses, cameras, binoculars, clothing, etc. In view of the fact that the second sample week was during Metro Vancouver's tourist season, when there is a significant increase in vehicular traffick, it is somewhat surprising that the number of car prowls remained practically unchanged.

With an average of 166 per week, residential burglaries were next in frequency and consisted of 65 percent of the total burglary problem. Of the total 332 residential burglaries, only twenty-eight incurred a loss of over $1,000 and, of these, eleven were over $2,000.

This was followed by known shoplifts which averaged 65 per week. In approximately 98 percent of the cases the retail price of the goods was under two hundred dollars.

Commercial burglaries were next in frequency, averaging sixty-three per week, and comprising 25 percent of the reported burglaries.

Lastly, institutional burglaries such as schools,

churches, clinics and offices were the least frequent event and formed only 10 percent of the burglary scene.

Since commercial and institutional premises are generally better protected than residential, it might appear significant, if not alarming, that on the basis of frequency they comprised one-third of the total burglaries for the two sample weeks. However, a later table will show that in only twenty-one of the 175 commercial and institutional burglaries did the loss exceed $1,000 and, of these, only seven exceeded $2,000. Two of the seven involved theft of a mobile home and a unique Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Table 1 indicates a theft redistribution system handling mainly used property on a small volume basis, a view not contradicted by the fencing industry described later. Although three of the burglaries over $2,000 involved the theft of machine shop tools, hand and power masonry tools and mechanics tools, the overall scenario indicates that the perpetrators of these offences are responding more to a consumer goods market for stolen property as opposed to an industrial market. In order to test the validity of this belief Table 2 provides a break-down of property stolen via burglaries, and Table 3 via car prowls and thefts generally.

Table 2 shows that insofar as residential burglaries were concerned, cash, either alone or with other items, constituted the most frequent loss. This is partially

TABLE 2

Types and Frequency of Property Taken Via Burglaries

Type of Property	Frequency Apr. 22-28		Frequency July 8-14	
	Res.	Inst. & Comm.	Res.	Inst. & Comm.
Antique, stamp or coin collections	3	0	0	0
Appliances/Home furnishings	13	3	15	3
Cash (ONLY)	20	16	19	21
Cash and goods	37	19	24	6
Cameras.	9	10	1	0
Leather or fur coats/clothing	17	2	11	0
Drugs	1	2	0	0
Foodstuffs/Liquor	17	6	15	4
Guns	6	1	9	0
Televisions/radios, tape decks, speakers	46	7	36	5
Jewelry/Wrist watches	36	4	25	0
Motor Vehicles/Motorcycles/ Bicycles	5	4	1	2
Office machines and equipment	5	16	9	5
Power or hand tools	14	12	15	6
Sporting goods	3	1	4	5
Travellers cheques/credit cards	2	0	3	0
Welding outfits (ox/ac)	0	2	1	0
Miscellaneous	40	20	25	16
NIL - ransacked premises only, searched for cash.	24	20	22	12

due to the availability of cash in residential premises for, given the opportunity it is likely to be the preferred target of the burglar. Where cash is present in a house, it will be taken - even if it is in a piggy bank. Where goods are involved, however, home entertainment equipment ranks highest in frequency, followed by jewelry which is much easier to carry and conceal. Not surprisingly, thefts of cash were also number one in the commercial/institutional burglaries, followed next by office machines/equipment and then hand/power tools.

With reference to the last line of this table, it is reasonable to assume that the burglar was after cash only. In many cases he ignored jewelry and popular consumer goods that were lying in plain view.

Table 3 provides a breakdown by either frequency (F) or actual number stolen (#S) of property lost through car prowls or thefts generally. Some of the goods such as food, liquor, cigarettes, shrubs, turf, peat moss, garden ornaments, were probably used or consumed by the culprit, but the high incidence of theft of other items such as automotive parts and accessories, cameras, clothing, coats, boots, furniture, furnishings, television sets, jewelry, and tools, definitely indicate resale for cash.

Carelessness, misplaced trust, and the high incidence of car prowls contributed heavily to the significant number of wallets (eighty-nine) and purses (fifty-one) that were stolen during the two weeks reviewed. In addition to money and personal identification, these wallets and purses contained an average of three to four credit cards of the usual variety, some of which would undoubtedly be sold to specialized fences.

When one considers all the advantages of selecting motor vehicles as the target for theft, together with the limited skill and knowledge required and the market anxious for such goods, it is not surprising that thefts from the interior and exterior of motor vehicles outnumbered all other thefts by a wide margin. Police do not believe all

TABLE 3

Property Stolen in Motor Vehicle Prowls and General Thefts

Property Stolen	F or #S	Week ending Apr. 28/76	Week ending July 14/76
Motor Vehicle - exterior (eg. wheels, batteries, engine parts, mirrors, etc.)	F	81	92
Motor Vehicle - interior (Tape decks)	#S	58	48
(AM radios, 8 track tapes, and/or speakers)	F	49	56
(From M/V and boats)(Citizen band or 2 way radios)	#S	7	18
(Other - seats, tachometer, steering wheel, etc.)	F	9	10
Boats/Canoes	#S	2	6
Brief case and contents	#S	5	5
Cameras	#S	14	29
Cash (only)	F	21	27
Cigarettes	F	6	0
Clothing/Coats/Boots	F	53	40
Fire extinguishers	#S	5	3
Foodstuffs/Liquor	F	8	4
Furniture/Furnishings/T.V.'s	F	14	18
Guns	#S	2	1
Jewel ry (including wristwatches)	F	15	12
Lawnmowers/Trimmers	#S	7	11
Lumber	F	7	3
Motorcycles	#S	4	7
Musical Instruments	#S	1	1
Outboard Motors	#S	4	5
Purses and contents	#S	30	21
Shrubs/Turf/Peat moss/Garden ornaments	F	7	12
Sports equipment/Saddles	F	24	33
Tools (hand or power), welding outfits, wheelbarrows, ladders	F	34	33
Wallet and contents	#S	41	48
Other miscellaneous items (eg. blank cheques, cosmetics, sunglasses, mini-calculators, radar detector, hair dryer, etc.)	F	67	85

reported thefts of AM/FM radios, eight-track tape decks, two-way radios and mag wheels, actually occurred but suspect an unknown degree of insurance fraud. Of the 106 eight-track tape decks stolen only 11 percent of the victims were able to provide the serial or identification number. The owners of the two-way radios indicated a greater awareness of possible theft because of the twenty-five who did suffer loss 44 percent were able to immediately provide the police with the serial or identification number, and 24 percent of the remainder promised to submit the information in a follow up report.

Because the whole question of property identification is receiving increased attention by the police departments in the Metro Vancouver region, the logging sheet for burglaries (Appendix "B") contained a column for coding identification of the stolen goods, as stated in the police report, under the five different categories listed in Table 4.

This table was derived by taking all burglaries and subtracting from them those cases in which either the loss was unknown, nothing was taken, or the items taken were not uniquely identifiable or expected to be, such as cash, food, clothing, liquor, and cigarettes. Because institutions and businesses are assumed to be more likely to keep records of property for tax and accounting purposes, one would expect the identifiability rate to be significantly higher than those of residential losses, but in this analysis it was not.

TABLE 4

Residential, Commercial and Institutional Break and Entry Victims' Knowledge of Serial Numbers (Where Applicable)

Identification Knowledge	Residential		Commercial & Institutional	
	Frequency for week ending Apr. 28	Frequency for week ending July 14	Frequency for week ending Apr. 28	Frequency for week ending July 14
Serial or identification number known	18	6	10	2
Serial or identification number known plus extra markings	0	0	0	0
Able to give serial or identification number for partial list of items	1	16	3	3
Can give adequate description of unique items (eg. credit cards, personal papers, custom made items, initials affixed)	30	17	3	2
Follow-up report promised	5	8	6	2
Unable to identify stolen property	66	54	21	14
Identifiability Rate:	42.6%	42.0%	43.2%	33.3%

Although no statistics are available for the national average identifiability rate, an optimistic estimate would be around 15 to 20 percent, therefore, the average rate of 42.3 percent for residential and 38.3 percent for commercial/institutional is high. This is no doubt directly or indirectly attributable to the police-sponsored property identification programs conducted during recent years. Although the burglary rate has decreased in those few specific areas where the "Operation Identification and Home Security Program" has been implemented, according to

the figures supplied by each of the twelve participating police departments, the overall burglary rate for the Metro Vancouver region has remained steady for the period January 1, 1974 to May 31, 1976. When one considers the significant population growth during that period in some of the suburban communities covered by this survey, the fact that the overall burglary rate remained constant is complimentary to the efforts of the police. Nevertheless, given these high rates of identifiability by victims it could be surmised that the burglars are (a) not aware of the risks they are taking because of the high identifiability rate, (b) too amateurish or desperate to care, (c) aware that recovery rates for stolen property are low, or else (d) accommodations such as prompt alteration or removal of identification numbers or marks and rapid delivery to consumer are made elsewhere in the movement of stolen property system to offset the identifiability factor. More is said on this topic from the fence's viewpoint later in this report.

Identifiability of stolen property, or not being acquainted with appropriate fences would appear to be a factor with some burglars because Table 2 shows that in 25.6 percent (85/332) of the total residential burglaries, and 39.4 percent (69/175) of the total commercial/ institutional burglaries, which occurred during the two sample weeks, the perpetrator searched for only cash and ignored consumer goods.

As a final analysis of property stolen via burglary, the aspect of cash value was considered. Tables 5 and 6, covering residential and commercial/institutional burglaries respectively, summarize the results of this analysis. The burglary totals in these tables differ from those in Table 1 because they do not include burglaries where either the victim did not know if anything was missing, or did not know the value of the missing property at the time of the initial police investigation and did not submit a follow-up report with this information.

Table 7 provides a breakdown of Tables 5 and 6 on the basis of percentage.

When one considers that the victim may be inclined to inflate the real value of stolen property in order to be on the safe side with the insurance company, and that a normal colour television costs $500 to $600, it would appear significant that in more than 50 percent of the overall burglaries the loss was under $151, and that in 88 percent and 86 percent of residential and commercial/institutional burglaries, respectively, the loss was under $801. This percentage would rise slightly if we also included the weekly average for our two sample weeks of fifteen residential and six commercial/institutional aborted events where the burglar was apprehended at the scene, his forced entry attempt was unsuccessful, or while in the burglary act he was scared off by an alarm, dog or occupant on the premises.

TABLE 5

Cash Value of Property Stolen in Residential Break and Entries

Cash Values	Frequency for Week Ending Apr. 28/76	Frequency for Week Ending July 14/76
$ 0- 50	45	56
51- 100	28	9
101- 150	13	11
151- 200	12	4
201- 250	10	5
251- 300	8	6
301- 350	6	5
351- 400	5	5
401- 450	4	3
451- 500	4	8
501- 550	2	4
551- 600	3	2
601- 700	4	3
701- 800	1	4
801- 900	1	0
901-1000	5	2
1001-1500	11	1
1501-2000	1	4
2001-5000	3	5
OVER 5000	2	1
TOTAL:	168	138

TABLE 6

Commercial and Institutional Break and Entries

Frequency for Week Ending Apr. 28/76	Frequency for Week Ending July 14/76
34	25
10	16
5	7
6	3
4	1
4	2
0	3
4	3
2	0
0	1
2	0
1	0
2	0
1	0
0	1
0	0
6	4
4	0
3	1
1	2
89	69

TABLE 7

Value of Cash or Property Taken

	$0-$150	$151-$800	$801-$2000	Over $2000
RESIDENTIAL				
April 22-28	51.2%	35.1%	10.8%	2.9%
July 8-14	55.1%	35.5%	5.1%	4.3%
COMMERCIAL/ INSTITUTIONAL				
April 22-28	55.1%	29.2%	11.2%	4.5%
July 8-14	69.6%	18.8%	7.3%	4.3%

B. SOME SUMMARIZING COMMENTS

Based upon this brief but detailed analysis of reported thefts and burglaries during two widely separated random weeks, it is evident that thefts FROM motor vehicles, to wit: ANYTHING from the interior or exterior, numerically constitute the largest portion of the Metropolitan Vancouver theft problem, with eight-track tape decks being the preferred object of theft. General miscellaneous thefts comprise the next largest category, followed by residential burglaries where 56 percent of the losses were under $151. Combined commercial and institutional burglaries formed the next largest group with 61 percent of the losses being less than $151. Apprehended shoplifters come last, and in approximately 98 percent of these cases, the goods involved had a retail value not exceeding $200.

As 95.5 percent of all reported burglaries incurred a loss valued at less than $2,001 major thefts comprise a very small part of the total theft picture.

The Metropolitan Vancouver region theft situation is basically undramatic and composed of individual losses high in number, but relatively low in value. Because of police-sponsored aid and publicity programs relative to the marking of valued possessions or recording the serial numbers for possible future reference, the identifiability rate is very high in the area surveyed thereby improving the chances that the stolen property may eventually be recovered.

III. THE METROPOLITAN VANCOUVER FENCING SCENE

A Note Regarding Methodology and Conceptual Framework

As a means of establishing a data base, the collection of information on fences was commenced by reading the appropriate files of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police National Criminal Intelligence Section (Vancouver), the City of Vancouver Police Department Criminal Intelligence Unit, National Harbours Board Police Intelligence Unit, and the Insurance Crime Prevention Bureaux.

It should be mentioned that prior to March 1, 1976, the R.C.M.P. and Vancouver City Police intelligence units named above operated as separate agencies. The Vancouver P.D. Criminal Intelligence Unit maintained a separate card index and general files on all known or suspected fences. The R.C.M.P. did not. When they were unified into the Vancouver Integrated Intelligence Unit as of March 1, 1976, a new joint records system commenced as of that date without a separate category for fences.

Information that a particular business or individual was an alleged or suspected fence was acquired by the police most frequently from informants. At other times, it was discovered fortuitously during searches, wiretapping or interrogations, conducted by police investigating other criminal activity.

The impression formed was that routine fences were of little concern to the intelligence unit because, if the allegation received any follow-up attention at all,

it appears to have been easily dismissed as being without basis if the initial investigation by the assigned intelligence officer failed to produce any supporting evidence.

While conducting research on the files of the above-named four agencies, a five page fence description form (Appendix "A") was commenced on every individual named since April 1974 as a known, alleged or suspected fence for stolen property. The personal knowledge of the members of these agencies was also solicited.

The researcher then visited the twelve participating municipal police departments and interviewed appropriate detectives for any additional information on fences already identified, and to develop description forms for any new ones in the Metropolitan Vancouver region.

This was followed by interviews of members of the R.C.M.P. Special "E" Squad regarding fences connected with motorcycle clubs; members of the Vancouver P. D. Drug Squad regarding fences who were also drug traffickers; members of the Vancouver P. D. Second Hand Detail concerning pawnbrokers, salvage companies, scrap metal dealers, and secondhand merchandise dealers in general suspected of fencing; members of the Co-ordinated Law Enforcement Unit, Joint Forces Operation (Vancouver), who had previously been, or were currently involved in, the investigation of fences; and the newly formed Vancouver Integrated Intelligence Unit, Anti-Fencing Section.

To complete the circle, the names of all these fences were checked through the name index systems of the R.C.M.P. and Vancouver P. D. intelligence units in an effort to uncover additional or updated information.

As a next step a check of the Canadian Police Information Centre criminal records was made to acquire or confirm the correct spelling of the names, birthdate, criminal record and fingerprint section number (FPS) of every identified fence. With this information the author was able to have a search made of the R.C.M.P. Crime Index Section in Vancouver and to read every available personal file on these fences.

A final comparison was then made against the files of the V.I.I.U. Anti-Fencing Section to acquire any recent changes in address, occupations, vehicles, or circumstances of interest. Where biographical data were still missing various open directories and records were searched.

As of September 20, 1976, the research had produced 201 fence description forms in various stages of completeness, plus the names of other alleged fences which had not been checked through police records for substantiation or otherwise. Nevertheless, it was decided to terminate further research as enough data had been collected from which to draw firm conclusions.

In order to achieve an acceptable standard of quality, any fence description form having one or more of the following weaknesses was rejected:

(a) the accusation of fencing was more than two years old;

(b) the basis for the allegation was weak;

(c) the fence was too minor to be worthy of concern;

(d) the fence had moved from British Columbia;

(e) the present whereabouts of the fence was not known;

(f) the subject was basically a thief, burglar or shoplifter who fenced his own stolen merchandise;

(g) fencing was only a small part of the subject's overall criminal activity.

Data on the remaining 154 fences were then typed onto a newly designed form (see Appendix "D"). These forms were compiled into a Metropolitan Vancouver region catalogue of known fences. Twenty copies in loose-leaf notebook form were then compiled by the Co-ordinated Law Enforcement Unit, Policy Analysis Division. On October 25 these copies were distributed to the thirteen contributing police departments for use on a trial basis. If its existence proved to be a useful investigative aid, it was hoped that the V.I.I.U. would accept responsibility for its revision, expansion and distribution on a continuing basis.

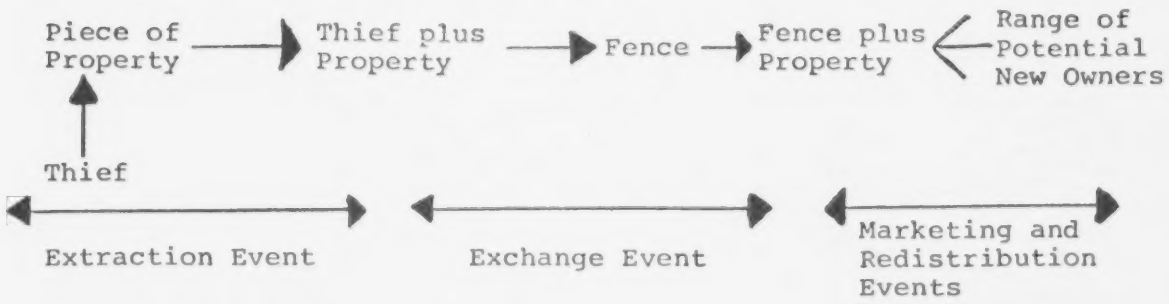
For the purpose of analysis, the author reviewed the original version of the 154 fence description forms mentioned above and removed those which were not rated as either "consistent" , "major", or "active" as of April 1, 1976. The remaining 106 fences were then used as the sample group for the tables contained in this report.

The rating of a fence as either "consistent", "major", or "active" was usually based upon the personal assessment of at least two detectives acquainted with the fence. These assessments were not necessarily supported by hard intelligence. In many instances the detectives admitted unsuccessful efforts to develop hard intelligence, but still believed their assessment to be valid based upon other supporting indicators. In cases of conflicting opinion where a reasonable doubt was created, the fence was downgraded to "alleged" or "occasional" and did not qualify for the sample group. This was a form of safeguard against exaggeration.

The materials on which the following pages are based have been subjected to considerable scrutiny and have undergone some independent efforts at verification to assure the reader of the confidence that can be placed in them.

One final preliminary note is necessary here. This relates to the conceptual framework that has shaped the following definition and analysis of the Metropolitan Vancouver fencing scene:

> "The fence is treated throughout this work as that individual, or group of individuals, performing the role of market manager in the property theft industry; that is, the receiver can be thought of as both the person and the mechanism (a combination of person plus setting) by which property stolen by the thief is disposed of and redistributed to new possessors. Like market managers in legitimate property flow systems, the fence can be seen to occupy an intermediary's niche in the movement of property from original owners to new ones. The illegitimate property flow system of contemporary theft can be visualized as follows:



Here the thief acts upon a piece of property by stealing it; the property moves with him until he reaches the fence. The fence buys the property from the thief, performs a set of marketing functions, then redistributes it to a new owner(s).

The conceptualization of the fence as the middleman in the stolen property marketplace has

> elsewhere been found to be a particularly valuable tool to describe his activities. It is believed to be an accurate representation of the fence's role as well as a powerful explanatory framework for understanding stolen property movements generally. In most of what follows, then, the data will be analyzed with reference to this framework and to the managerial role of the fence within it."[14]

As explained above, the Metropolitan Vancouver area was found to have at least 106 individuals who were known or alleged to handle stolen property on a consistent basis as of April 1, 1976. As expected, the fencing population as a whole reflects a wide range of business skills and specific commercial capabilities. They naturally vary in size and scope of operation. For example, there is a vast difference between the fencing activities of the street level drug dealer and the individual who owns several businesses and handles heavy duty equipment. However, for analytical and descriptive purposes we will first examine the various characteristics of fences as individuals, and then as members of a fencing industry.

A. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. Demographic Descriptors

The fence questionnaire form used by the author included provision for sex, race and age. All of the 106 consistent fences identified were male, comprising 98

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[14]M. E. Walsh, Stolen Property and Its Redistribution

caucasians and eight orientals. One senior detective of the Vancouver Police Department claimed knowledge of several female fences connected with shoplifting and prostitution rings in that city, but whether on a consistent basis he was not certain.

The following list shows the age breakdown as of June 30, 1976 of the sample group of 106 fences:

Under age 20	1
Age 20-29	29
Age 30-39	39
Age 40-49	23
Age 50 or over	12
Age not known	2

This list illustrates that 87 percent are in the 20 to 49 age range, with the average age of thirty-six years being lower than that found in American cities.

2. Commercial and Occupational Characteristics

Table 1 below summarizes the commercial and occupational characteristics of the fencing sample as of April 1976, and based upon the Canadian Standard Industrial Classification Manual (revised 1970). The table divides the sample into sixteen categories based upon the existence and nature of the commercial and occupational characteristics or affiliations possessed by its members. For example, camping grounds, barber shops, poolrooms, dry cleaners, restaurants, taverns, cocktail bars and dude ranches were classified as "Community, Business or Personal

TABLE 1

Commercial/Occupational Characteristics of Consistent Fences

N=106

Types of Businesses	No. for Category
I. Agriculture	1
II. Forestry	0
III. Fishing and Trapping	0
IV. Mines, Quarries and Oil Wells	0
V. Manufacturing Industries and General Entrepreneurship	3
VI. Construction Industry	3
VII. Transportation, Communication and Other Utilities	2
VIII. Wholesale Trade	4
IX. Retail Trade	21
X. Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	0
XI. Community, Business and Personal Service Industries	8
XII. Public Administration and Defense	0
Occupational Affiliations	
XIII. Employed by Others	39
XIV. Illegal Occupations	11
XV. Other (pensioner, unemployed, retired, no outside business or occupational association)	9
XVI. Uncertain or not known	5

Service Industries"; auto wreckers and metal scrap dealers were classified under "Wholesale Trade"; automobile mechanical and body repair shops were classified as "Retailers of Automotive Products."

Of the 101 fences whose employment status could be confirmed, it can be seen from items I to XI of the table that the largest portion are businessmen-fences, who comprise 41.6 percent of the sample. Fences of employee status in legitimate occupations were the next largest group and

comprised a significant 38.6 percent. Their fencing activities may or may not be conducted in conjunction with this employment. Therefore, a full 80 percent of the sample can be seen to possess some affiliation to the legitimate economic life of the community either as businessmen or employees of legitimate businesses.

Distinguished from the above group are those fences in the sample who possess no ties to the legitimate economy. Included are those in illegal occupations such as career criminals or drug traffickers who comprise 10.9 percent of the sample; and those with no economic associations (unemployed, DVA pension, retired, etc.) who comprise 8.9 percent of the sample. Regarding this last and smallest category may be considered as the only full time fences since they possess no other legitimate or illegitimate obligations. This indicates that in most cases fencing is not a full-time activity, but rather one pursued together with other efforts. Because private business fostered the highest ratio in our sample, it is apparent that the activity of operating a legitimate business is most compatible with the fencing trade. This finding concurs with surveys made in other large cities and is hardly surprising when one considers that many of the skills associated with normal business acumen are important as well for the fencing trade.

a. Businessmen Fences

Table 2 below describes in more detail the businesses of the businessmen-fences, the fequency with which they appear in the sample, and the industrial classification of each.

The fact that automotive service stations and repair shops rank first in this table is consistent with the previously noted information that thefts from the interior and exterior of motor vehicles were the most numerous type of theft event during the two sample weeks analyzed earlier in this report. Similarly, as general thefts and residential burglaries were second and third, respectively, it is logical that retailers for consumer goods and dealers in secondhand merchandise would follow. This bears out the contention on page 15 that is is possible to predict the kind of fencing activity by analyzing the property being stolen.

Typically, restaurants are high on the list for several reasons. They are open longer than most retail and wholesale firms. They provide a meeting and socializing place for their clientele. Because it is a service oriented type of business, the managers or owners of restaurants become more personally acquainted with their steady customers than in other kinds of retail outlets, and it takes less effort to fulfill the role of middleman between thief and customer. It might be reasonable, then, to expect to find as many consistent fences among owners

TABLE 2

Businesses of Businessmen-Fences in Order of Frequence, N=42

Ranking vis-à-vis frequency of appearance	Business Type	No. in Sample	Business Classification
1st	Service Stations/Auto Repair	6	R
2nd	Retailing Consumer Goods	5	R
3rd	Second Hand Merchandising Including Machinery	4	R
4th	Restaurants	3	S
	Light Construction/General Contracting	3	C
	General Entrepreneurship*	3	MTWS
5th	Metals, Scrap & Auto Wreckers	2	W
	Wholesaling Consumer Goods	2	W
	Jewelry Sales	2	R
	Transportation Services	2	T
	Dealers in Stamps, Coins, Antiques	2	R
6th	Home Furnishing Store	1	R
	Entertainment/Amusement Industry	1	S
	Barber Shop	1	S
	Trailer Court	1	S
	Farmer/Livestock Dealer	1	W
	Grocery/Meat Store	1	R
	Guest Ranch	1	S
	Car Pickup Service	1	S

GLOSSARY

R - Retail
S - Service
C - Construction
W - Wholesale
T - Transportation
M - Manufacturing

*broad portfolio of business interests

of beer parlours, bars or taverns as among owners or managers of restaurants. This was actually found to be the case in similar studies of American cities but it was not so for the Metropolitan Vancouver region. In fact, not a single owner of a beer parlour, bar or tavern was identified as a fence, consistent of otherwise. This favourable situation could be attributed to the efficient teamwork of the police and the provincial Liquor Administration Branch inspectors by consistently enforcing the high licencing standards set down in the Government Liquor Act and Regulations.

The absence of pawnbrokers and salvage companies from Table 2 resulted from lack of relevant information at the time of the study and not from their non-participation in the handling of stolen property. Insofar as pawnbrokers are concerned they are required by the British Columbia Pawnbrokers Act to keep records of their dealings and to keep records of their dealings and to produce their books when ordered or summoned by a Court of summary jurisdiction. Those licensed to operate within the City of Vancouver must comply with additional legal requirements as contained in the Second Hand Dealers By-Law No. 2807, which applies to second hand dealers, pawnbrokers and junk dealers. Two members of the Vancouver Police Department Second Hand Detail make frequent inspections of pawnbrokers' records. Due to insufficient manpower this same attention is not given to salvage companies, second hand dealers, or junk dealers. Salvage companies must keep records to satisfy the Federal Income

Tax Department and to comply with the British Columbia Social Tax Act, but according to police sources there is sufficient laxness in the records-keeping requirements that acquisition and redistribution in quantity of new stolen goods is possible with little risk of detection. As indicated by Table 2, it is businesses that do not have official accountability systems that are the safest recipients and distributors of stolen property.

As mentioned earlier, the "business classification" shown in Table 2 is based upon the Canadian Standard Industrial Classification Manual and by its definition our sample has 21 retail outlets, eight service, five wholesale, three construction, three multiple business status, and two transportation. Because retail businesses provide a natural cover for distribution of stolen property, it appears logical that numerically they should dominate our fence sample, but when one considers that six of this group are automotive service stations and repair shops, which are as much service oriented as they are retail, the ratio would change significantly to fifteen retail and fourteen service outlets if we reclassified them to the alternate group. Either way retail outlets do not exceed fifty percent of the sample, and when compared to similar surveys the latter ratio of 35 percent retail and 33 percent service is more compatible. This indicates that being a direct outlet for stolen property is not the most crucial requirement of a fence. According to one research criminologist,

> "The answer to this question lies primarily in the inherent nature of the fencing business itself. Fencing is, after all, both a service and goods industry. For the thief, the fence is a purveyor of a service - and a critical one indeed - i.e. he allows the thief to divest himself of stolen property that would tend to incriminate him. In addition, the fence provides the thief with a more useful commodity (usually money) in exchange for such goods. To the customer, the fence is a merchant of goods, providing him with desired merchandise, often at reduced prices. The dual role of the fence as both a buyer and seller of stolen property requires him to have not only an outlet to sell such goods, but also a suitable setting in which to receive them. These two requirements are not necessarily satisfied in one setting, but when they are, it is likely to be a setting in which a good-services mix prevails or can be established."[15]

Table 2A below contains a re-listing of those businesses found in Table 2, together with their Canadian Standard Industrial classifications, an indication where the business falls into a goods → services dimension, and the suitability of the business as a direct outlet for stolen property.

It may be worth noting that of the business types listed, 68 percent have a degree of service orientation. The service component of a business enables the fence to get to know his customers better, thus enabling him not only to find sources of supply for stolen goods, but also to anticipate sources of demand. This feature assists him

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[15] Ibid.

TABLE 2A

Businesses of Businessmen-Fences Noted According to a Goods-Services Dimension Continuum and the Existence of A Direct Outlet for Stolen Property

Business Type	Classification Code	Goods-Services Continuum	Presence of Direct Outlet
Service Stations/ Auto Repair	R	G-S mix	Limited
Retailing Consumer Goods	R	G only	Yes
Second Hand Merchandising including Machinery	R	G only	Yes
Restaurants	S	G-S mix	Limited
Construction/General Contracting	C	G-S mix	Limited
General Entrepreneurship*	MTWS	G-S mix	Potentially
Metals, Scrap and Auto Wreckers	W	G-S mix	Limited
Wholesaling Consumer Goods	W	G only	Yes
Jewelry Sales	R	G limited, S mix	Limited
Transportation Services	T	S intensive	
Dealers in Stamps, Coins, Antiques	R	G only	Yes
Home Furnishing Store	R	G only	Yes
Entertainment/ Amusement Industry	S	S intensive	Limited
Barber Shop	S	S intensive	Limited
Trailer Court	S	S intensive	
Farmer/Livestock Dealer	W	G-S mix	Limited
Grocery/Meat Store	R	G only	Yes
Guest Ranch	S	S intensive	Limited
Car Pickup Service	S	S intensive	

*Indicates a broad portfolio of business interests.

to both buy and sell stolen property more intelligently.

The third column of Table 2A is considered to be of interest because it shows the degree to which the business is suitable as a direct outlet for stolen property. As can be seen, this characteristic is not nearly so important as is commonly thought. Only six of the nineteen business types listed are fully suitable for direct redistribution of stolen property. Of the remainder, nine are of only limited suitability, based upon the type of stolen goods involved. This has to be viewed, however, with some degree of flexibility in actual practice because fences do not necessarily restrict themselves to handling stolen property compatible with their legitimate business.

Considering the advantages that the businessman-fence has over other fences, such as (a) expertise gained through constant participation in the economic marketplace as a seller of goods and/or services, (b) the natural cover provided by his legitimate business in handling property and dealing with people, and (c) his more prestigious standing in the community which tends to cause people to regard him as honest and law-abiding unless proven otherwise, it was expected that this group would numerically exceed by a wide margin those fences of the employee status, but as shown in Table 3, this did not occur.

b. Employee Fences

Table 3 below lists the legitimate occupations of employee fences as found in the overall total of 106

TABLE 3

Occupations of Employee Fences

N=39

Occupation	No. in Sample
Public/Private Transportation Services Employee	7
Heavy Industry/Factory Worker	7
Labourer/Roofer/Carpet Layer/Siding Installer	6
Seaman/Dockworker/Warehouseman	5
Mechanic/Service Station Employee	4
Salesman	4
Tavern/Cocktail Bar/Cabaret Employee	3
Electrician/Elevator Repairman	2
Insurance/Claims Investigator	1

consistent fences in the Metropolitan Vancouver region as of April 1976, and the dominance of service-oriented occupations is again worthy of note. Even though they lacked the protection of the commercial setting enjoyed by the businessman-fence, and were under the control of superiors insofar as their time, activities and movements were concerned, these disadvantages did not prevent them from engaging in fencing stolen goods not necessarily relevant to their occupation. Due to the diversity of occupations and degree of control, the extent to which they were able to conduct their fencing activity in conjunction with their normal occupation differed widely. For example, by virtue of their regular availability in a specific location, and constant direct contact with patrons, it was logical that beer parlour waiters found it easy to fill the middleman role between thief and customer.

In the private transportation sector certain veteran long-distance commercial truck drivers, through their extensive contacts in the trucking society were able to acquire and sell a wide range of stolen property from new quick-turnover consumer goods still in the carton, to used truck tarpaulins, chains, CB radios, and similar motor vehicle equipment. Fences who were service station employees, dockworkers or warehousemen, appeared to use their job setting to make contact with individuals able to provide stolen property, while the factory workers, labourers and one insurance claims investigator used their positions to sell stolen property to fellow workers. Many of these employee fences obtained their stolen property from sources such as burglars, thieves or shoplifters, which were completely separate from their regular occupation.

Because this group of fences cannot usually furnish a plausible explanation for the legitimate possession of large amounts of property, it tends to handle stolen merchandise on a quick-turnover basis, often in response to specific customer orders. As they comprise a large segment of the fencing market of the Metropolitan Vancouver region it would appear that they are aware of the low conviction rate for possession of stolen property and consider the risk worth taking for the profits to be made.

c. Criminally-Occupied Fences

Table 4 below indicates the primary vocations of criminally-occupied individuals known also to fence stolen

TABLE 4

Primary Criminal Vocations of
Criminally-Occupied Fences
N=11

Criminal Vocation	No. in Sample
Career Criminal	5
Drug Trafficker	3
Fencing	2
Burglar	1

property. The primary vocations are based upon the evaluations made by detectives personally acquainted with the individuals and labelled according to what was known to be his major criminal activity.

With the exception of one 25-year-old career criminal whose police record extended back only four years, the average age of the remaining four was 48.5 years with their extensive police records ranging back from eighteen to thirty-five years.

This latter mature group is possibly best described in the assessment of a research criminologist who said:

> "To some extent, their 'active' days are over so they remain contact people, set-up men, advisors (sic) and fences to younger and more active counterparts. Fencing is only a part of the services they provide and not even necessarily a major one. In general, if they receive stolen goods, it is to turn them over to other, better situated fences whom thieves may not know directly. It is the lack of knowledge of younger thieves that allows such individuals to

> extend their usefulness in the criminal milieu long after their physical skills and desirability as crime partners have diminished. The importance of such figures, then, depends upon the extent of their knowledge monopoly or upon their ability to effect a smooth transition from active criminal to the passive role of fence by maintaining connections established earlier in their criminal careers. Few can do this, but those that succeed become important and trusted receivers, using their past records to recommend them."[16]

The next group in Table 4 are three street-level drug traffickers who take stolen property in exchange for drugs. Although drug traffickers usually and preferably deal in cash, their greed for money makes it difficult for them to resist accepting stolen property for which they allow only a fraction of the retail value. Because street-level drug dealers are so numerous in the Metropolitan Vancouver region and are constantly changing due to police pressure and arrests, it is difficult for detectives to identify which ones are consistent fences. Nevertheless, whether it be on a consistent or occasional basis, drug dealers who exchange drugs for stolen property are an important dimension in the fencing scene since they allow the drug-using thief to accomplish two goals in one transaction, namely the divesture of stolen property and the acquisition of drugs.

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[16] Ibid.

d. "Other" Fences

Table 5 shows the setting characteristics of the remaining residue of our fencing sample. Where the detectives were uncertain as to the fences' occupational status as of April 1976, he was classified as "not known" rather than chance an incorrect guess.

Eight fences were assessed as "unemployed" because that was their normal status. They avoided steady employment by choice, preferring to supplement their unemployment insurance income with money obtained through illegal activities such as fencing. Several of those in the unemployed and pensioner categories conducted their fencing activity out of their private homes, although it was not uncommon for them to use beer parlours to find their customers. No attempt was made to ascertain the types of neighbourhoods in which these fences resided nor to what degree they were patronized by their neighbours. The majority of these fences handled popular consumer goods delivered to their home by burglars, car prowlers, thieves and shoplifters. What they could not readily sell to

TABLE 5

Setting Characteristics of "Other" Fences

N=14

Setting	No. in Sample
Unemployed	8
Old Age Pension	1
DVA Pension	1
Not known	4

customers, they sold to better situated fences. Although it is assumed that this type of fence operates on a relatively small scale, this is not always the case. One such fence covered by these statistics, who has since been arrested, was found to have three sub-fences working for him as well as a gang of four or five juvenile burglars who stole to order. He had developed his business over a six year period to a point where he was handling approximately $100,000 worth of stolen property annually. Although he was a full-time fence, he was not included in Table 4 as a career criminal because he had no previous record in the Canadian Police Information Centre (C.P.I.C.) prior to his aforementioned arrest. Of the 106 consistent fences in the sample group only this individual and the two full-time criminal fences shown in Table 4 lived entirely off the profits of fencing. All of the others used fencing to supplement their incomes and need was not necessarily the motivation as some businessmen-fences owned profitable legitimate businesses.

3. Geographic and Commercial Range of Influence

The "Description of Fence" questionnaire (Appendix "A") contained a section for assessing the geographic and commercial range of influence of the individual based upon the knowledge and opinion of the detectives interviewed. Where conflicting opinion occurred, or reasonable doubt, the lesser range was used. The range of influence was estimated from the fence's primary base of operation, which

TABLE 6

Geographical Distribution of Consistent Fences,

Metropolitan Vancouver Region

N=106

Primary Base of Operation	Total	Range of Influence					
		Local Munc.	Metro Vanc.	Prov. Wide	Inter-Prov.	Canada/ U.S.A.	Not Known
Vancouver	29	6	17		4	2	
Surrey	17	4	9	1	1	2	
Burnaby	14	4	10				
Coquitlam	10	4	2	1	2		1
Delta	9	1	5	1	2		
North Vanc.	6	2	2	1			1
Richmond	5	2	2		1		
Port Moody	5		3	1			1
New Westminster	4	1	3				
Langley	4		2	1		1	
Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadow	3		2	1			
West Vancouver	0						

was not necessarily the same municipality in which he resided.

Excluding the City of Vancouver which has more than triple the population of its nearest rival among other geographical areas listed, no pattern was found in comparing the number of identified consistent fences to either size of population or average number of burglaries per month over the period January 1974 to May 1976. The distribution of consistent fences is obviously influenced by many factors, one of which could be the priority they are allocated in the enforcement program of the local police. To throw some light on what these other factors might be

SURREY		WEST VANCOUVER
114,650	-1976 Population-	36,471
139 sq. miles	-Area Covered -	38 sq. miles
825	-Pop. per sq. mi.-	960
Low to middle	-Income Bracket -	Middle to high
Relatively Transient	-Pop. Stability -	Stable
Highest Monthly rate for those listed except Vancouver	-Burglary Rate - Jan. 1974 to May 1976 -	Lowest monthly rate for those listed
Borders on 5 municipalities and the State of Washington	-Surrounding Area -	Borders on 1 municipality and the City of Vancouver
Above Average	-Drug Addict Ratio -	Average
HQ for Motorcycle Gang	-Special Problems -	Nil

the author made some comparisons between Surrey with its seventeen fences and West Vancouver with none. The advantages enjoyed by West Vancouver are obvious and need no elaboration.

4. Specialization Among Fences

The fence can exert special influence in the marketplace in several ways. Some may exert a local service monopoly by virtue of the additional services they provide. For example, a fence supplying drugs in exchange for stolen property will develop a business relationship with thieves and burglars who are drug addicts. If a fence has a familiar and convenient location in the downtown area he may exercise a geographical monopoly for shoplifters who wish to unload their stolen goods quickly. Similarly, he may locate himself on the edge of a warehouse district

convenient to dishonest truckers. Some achieve a personal monopoly by the fact that young local thieves and burglars are not familiar with any other fence. The fence may exercise a commodity monopoly by the nature of the goods he receives, and draws to himself those persons generating like goods. This latter type of special influence is often the most interesting since it can involve persons of widely varied levels in the stolen property marketplace and serve to bring them together through the fence. Table 7 below summarizes the degree of product and product line specialization found in our fence sample.

It is significant that 57.6 percent (61/106) of the consistent fences in the Metropolitan Vancouver region were categorized by police detectives as being generalists. The majority of this group preferred quick-turnover consumer goods such as jewelry, power tools, tape decks, coloured televisions, outboard motors, firearms, and similar products. The limitation on what they will handle is determined by various factors such as negotiated price, market conditions, degree of risk, storage facilities, and working relationships with other fences. Contrary to common belief, generalist fences do not always comprise the majority of the fence population. In similar surveys conducted in two large American cities they accounted for only 6 percent and 9.5 percent, respectively, of the consistent fence sample.[17] This high percentage of

[17] Ibid.

TABLE 7

Degree of Product and
Product Line Specialization

N=106

Type of Specialization	Frequency of Fences
1 product, 1 brand	0
1 product, brand assortment	10
2 products, brand assortment	0
3 or more products, brand assortment	0
1 product line, brand assortment	21
2 product lines, brand assortment	10
More than 2 product lines, specified	4
Specified as a generalist	61

generalist fences in Metropolitan Vancouver may indicate the existence of a strong market for consumer goods in the region, for despite the inroads into private income made by inflation and unemployment the desire for consumer goods does not diminish. In such climate, the buying public are more likely to quiet their consciences when an item out-of-reach on the legitimate market is made available by a fence.

Though 33 percent (35/106) of the fence sample restricted its range of stolen goods to three product lines, fences specializing in a single product with brand assortment comprised only 9.4 percent (10/106) of the sample, the smallest segment of all. Such findings may indicate a trend away from specialization in the Metropolitan Vancouver region. Table 8 describes in detail the specific products and product lines handled by fences not in the generalist category.

TABLE 8

PRODUCTS AND PRODUCT LINES HANDLED

BY SPECIALIED FENCES IN ORDER OF FREQUENCY

N=45

One Product	No. of Fences Handling the Goods	
Coloured Televisions	4	
Automobiles	2	
Motor Vehicle Tape Decks	1	
Motor Vehicle Transmissions	1	
Snap-on Tools	1	
Bicycles	1	
One Product Line		
Home Entertainment Equipment	5	
Jewelry	4	
Motor Vehicle/Motorcycle Parts & Accessories	2	
Heavy Duty Equipment (incl. dump trucks)	1	
Equestrian Equipment (incl. saddles)	1	
Household Appliances	1	
Building Materials (in volume)	1	
Sports Equipment	1	
Metal	1	
Firearms	1	
Livestock	1	
Antiques	1	
Two Product Lines		
Motor Vehicle Parts & Accessories/Building Materials in volume	2	(partnership)
Household Appliances/Home Entertainment Equipment	2	
Motor Vehicle Tape Decks/Home Entertainment Equipment	1	
Motor Vehicle Parts & Accessories/Home Entertainment Equipment	1	
Motor Vehicle Parts & Accessories/Tools	1	
Commercial Trailers/Heavy Duty Equipment	1	
Power Tools/Home Entertainment Equipment	1	
Jewelry/Motorcycle Parts	1	
Coins/Stamps	1	
Three Product Lines		
Jewelry/Coins/Home Entertainment Equipment	2	
Jewelry/Coins/Stamps	1	
Jewelry/Credit Cards/Money Orders	1	

An examination of this table shows that 35.5 percent (16/45) of the specialized fences handle home entertainment equipment. This is compatible with Table 2 on page 22 which showed that home entertainment equipment was second only to cash as the property most frequently taken in burglaries during the two sample weeks analyzed. Though there are no Canadian studies with which to compare, in the United States home entertainment equipment ranks highest as the stolen property fenced most frequently, with televisions of this product line being the most popular item.

Secondly, 28.8 percent (14/45) of the specialized fences deal in motor vehicles, their parts and/or accessories. This includes the whole range of motor vehicles from commercial trailers and bulldozers to motorcycles and tape decks. The preferred status of these items as indicated by this table is to be anticipated from Table 3 on page 24 showing that thefts from the interior and exterior of motor vehicles constituted the largest portion of the items stolen through car prowls and general theft during the two sample weeks analyzed. When we consider the growing proliferation of citizen band radios, eight-track tape decks or AM/FM radios, and the popular demand for these expensive items which take very limited skill to remove, it is likely that they will continue to be favourite theft targets and easily negotiable in the stolen property marketplace.

Jewelry ranks third in Table 8, being a product line for 20 percent of the specialized fences. In referring back to Table 2, it will be noted that jewelry followed cash and home entertainment equipment as the property most frequently taken in burglaries during the two sample weeks analyzed.

Table 8 was analyzed for the degree of relativity between the setting from which the fence operated and the market demand or specialized nature of the goods he handled. For example, of the sixteen specialized fences who dealt in motor vehicles, their parts or accessories, seven owned businesses that provided a legitimate cover and two others were auto mechanics of employee status. Similarly, those specialized fences listed as handling equestrian equipment, metal, livestock, antiques, coins and stamps, and commercial trailers all owned consonant businesses.

Conversely, because there is a wide market for home entertainment equipment and jewelry, only one out of sixteen, and two out of nine specialized fences, respectively, dealing in these product lines had legitimate commerce in these goods. Instead, it was found that televisions, tape decks, stereos, wristwatches, and similar merchandise were sold through a broad range of settings including residences, restaurants and taverns.

5. Transportation

In the fence questionnaire form a section was included which was intended to reflect the mode of transportation

TABLE 9

Mode of Transportation Usually Used By Fences to Convey Stolen Property

N=106

Mode of Transportation Used	No. in Sample
Not Known	65
Personal Motor Vehicle (Auto, Van, Truck)	27
Commercial Motor Vehicle Owned or Driven By Fence or Accomplice	7
Motor Vehicle Owned by Employer	2
Rented Truck or U-Haul Trailer	2
Commercial Carrier Truck	1
Air Express	1
Mail (Parcel Post)	1

usually used by the subject to distribute stolen property. Answers were solicited from the detectives interviewed based upon their actual knowledge, or belief based on reasonable grounds. No pressure was exerted for a positive answer. Table 9 shows the results.

The negative response of 61 percent (65/106) of the questionnaire forms would appear to indicate a lack of indepth knowledge on the part of the police regarding the method of operation of the fences covered. This lack of knowledge may be an indication that these sixty-five consistent fences are not under active investigation, or, if they are, that the investigations have not progressed very far. Knowledge concerning the mode of transportation used by a fence to convey stolen goods is usually acquired from arrested accomplices, police informants, electronic surveillance, or lengthy physical surveillance. Considering their heavy workloads and other priorities, the inclination of the police

to apprehend burglars and thieves is perfectly logical for it takes less time and resources and usually results in a quick conviction, while a charge of possession of stolen property against a businessman-fence takes a long time to develop and results in a lengthy court proceedings with a low conviction rate.

6. Criminal Records

On August 6, 1976 the names, birthdates, and R.C.M.P. Fingerprint Section (FPS) numbers were processed through the Canadian Police Information Centre to determine, on a national basis, the criminal records of our fence sample. On the C.P.I.C. computer program, convictions for both possession of stolen property or theft are shown merely as "theft". Similarly, the offence of "break and entry" is used to cover burglary, whether or not property is stolen. Table 10 provides the results of this records check.

This table shows that 65 percent (69/106) of the fencing sample have at least one criminal conviction of some kind and, of this group, 57.5 percent (61/106) have been convicted of theft, possession of stolen property, and/or burglary. In segregating and analyzing the forty-two business-fences, it was found that 50 percent of them had at least one conviction for theft, possession of stolen property, and/or burglary PLUS an additional record of one or more other offences contrary to the Criminal Code of Canada or federal statutes. Only 31 percent (13/42) of the businessmen-fences had no record with C.P.I.C.

TABLE 10

Types of Criminal Convictions

Recorded with CPIC Against

Metro Vancouver Consistent Fences

N=106

Criminal Conviction	No. of Fences	Percent of Fence Sample
No Record or No Convictions	37	35
Theft or Possession of Stolen Property	34	32
Theft and Break and Entry	24	22.7
Break and Entry	3	2.8
Other Offences Only	8	7.5

Note: The 61 fences covered by lines 2,3, and 4 may have had additional convictions for other Criminal Code or federal statute offences.

Table 10 indicates that a significant percentage of the sample do participate in criminal activity other than fencing and this makes them vulnerable as shown by the fact that between April 22 and September 5, 1976, sixteen of them were charged by police with possession of stolen property. However, to obtain a conviction the prosecution must prove four points to the satisfaction of the court:

(i) positive identification of the property by the lawful owner;

(ii) that the property in question was in fact stolen;

(iii) that it was in the possession of the accused; and

(iv) that the accused knew it was stolen.

This last point is the most difficult hurdle to overcome.

In the case of one prominent restaurant owner, police searched his home in December 1975 and found approximately $23,000 of stolen property such as coloured televisions, office equipment and cameras. In April 1976, before this matter was disposed of in court, police searched his home again and recovered a further $10,000 in similar stolen property, resulting in additional charges being laid. The accused was subsequently acquitted on all charges because the defence lawyer convinced the court that the police had not sufficiently proved the accused's knowledge that the goods were stolen.

7. A Composite of the Individual Fence

Based upon the various preceding tables which describe different aspects of the fencing sample, a composite description of the typical fence in the Metropolitan Vancouver region would be as follows: He is a white male, approximately thirty-six years of age, having at least one previous criminal conviction, the proprietor of a legitimate business which has a service oriented component. He is likely to be located in either Vancouver, Surrey or Burnaby, but his range of influence extends into other surrounding municipalities because of the existence of an efficient system of good highways which facilitates the movement of stolen property. He is a generalist fence who caters to the desires of the general public, and has a preference for home entertainment equipment or motor vehicle parts and accessories. He has an amiable working relationship

with at least one other fence and usually transports stolen property via his own private vehicle. Fencing is a sideline used to supplement his principal income, and he is not overly concerned with the possibility of being caught and convicted for possession of stolen property because, all things considered, he believes the odds are stacked in his favour.

B. FENCING INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

I. Structure

The questionnaire form used to gather information on fences also contained a section regarding method of operation. The results indicated that the established fencing industry in the Metropolitan Vancouver region is what might be called a loosely-knit fraternity, manifesting no evidence of organized crime control. It is comprised basically of independent dealers with their personal styles, contacts and merchandise preference. Although known to police, a significant number have engaged in fencing activity on a consistent and successful basis for several years partly because of the sophisticated manner in which they operate.

Based upon an analysis of our sample of 106 identified consistent fences, figures given below indicate a high degree of interaction between fences and the desire to expedite the movement of stolen property from thief to consumer. The hallmarks of a good fence are low visibility, a system of discreet contacts and the ability to move goods quickly. By selling items for which he does not have a potential sale, at a marginal profit, to a "brother" fence who has better contacts for that item, the initial fence reduces the risk of being caught with it, eliminates storage problems, recovers his invested capital at a profit, maintains good relations with his supplier, and strengthens his business relationship with the "brother" fence.

A breakdown of our fencing sample revealed that:

(a) Forty-four independent fences sell stolen property

they have acquired to or through other fences when conditions deem it necessary or advisable.

(b) To the best of the detectives' knowledge, twenty-five independent fences are not known to deal with other fences but sell direct to consumer only.

(c) Eleven fences are known to buy stolen property on a consistent basis but their method of disposal is not known.

(d) Fifteen fences have a dependent or interdependent partnership arrangement with another consistent fence.

(e) Eleven fences act mainly as middlemen between the source of stolen property and other fences.

The sixty-nine independent fences in (a) and (b) are those standard fences who form the link between thief and general public. Their settings and occupations vary widely. They prefer quick-turnover consumer goods or items that will be compatible with their legitimate business. They influence their regular suppliers on what to steal, and usually pay from 10 to 25 percent of the retail value.

Item (c) relates to those fences who police have confirmed are buying stolen property on a consistent basis, but investigation had not established how or where the goods were being sold at the time this study was made.

Of the fifteen fences mentioned in (d), ten were two-man partnerships, while the remaining five relied on middle-men wholesaler fences covered by (e).

As individuals, the eleven 'middlemen' fences in (e) are probably the most important and influential. Before

their arrest in 1976, two of them controlled their own networks of approximately twelve individuals, each filling a specific role in the theft, storage, transportation or sale of the merchandise. Others in this category have the trust and confidence of both professional criminals and prominent, reputable businessmen and are thereby able to negotiate deals without revealing the identity of either party. The balance of this group are wholesale fences who buy stolen goods in truckload quantities and sell to smaller fences.

The fencing industry of British Columbia also has innumerable occasional fences found in every strata of society. In 1976, Dr. Daniel J. Koenig of the University of Victoria conducted a survey designed to assess British Columbians' attitudes and experiences with organized criminal activities. In late March 1976, a representative sample of 1,987 British Columbians were computer-selected from the Federal voters' lists across British Columbia. Questionnaires were mailed and there were indications that 1,710 reached the addresses. As of the cut-off date for data analysis, the return rate stood at 66.5 percent with a response rate of 53 percent. One of the questions asked whether the respondent personally knew of the occurrance of any of twenty specific unlawful activities in the area where he lived.

The replies revealed that more respondents were personally knowledgeable of the sale of stolen merchandise

than of anything else, including cocaine or heroin trafficking, which were second and third. Of the 884 respondents, 12.6 percent claimed personal awareness of the local sale of stolen merchandise; 12.8 percent said they had been told about its existence; 30.4 percent acknowledged that it probably existed; and 44.2 percent denied any awareness.[19]

2. Property Handling Styles

In January 1976, the Burnaby Royal Canadian Mounted Police Detachment conducted a pilot project to ascertain the value of using an electric engraving pencil on personal and household effects as a means of deterring burglaries. Volunteers visited 1,600 homes and assisted the occupants to engrave their social insurance number on items of value. Where possible, a tamper-proof decal bearing the social insurance number was also applied. This decal is difficult to completely remove and, in addition to warning the burglar, it alerts the police that the item has been engraved. Notification to would-be burglars was also given by placing on exterior doors and windows decals which read, "These premises are protected by R.C.M.P. Operation Identification. All valuables are marked for identification." Within six months incidents of breaking and entering in the project

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[19]Dr. Daniel J. Koenig, Organized Criminal Activities in B. C.

area had decreased by 70 percent, and it was decided to expand "Operation Identification" over the entire municipality. By mid-September 1976, 70 percent of private homes and 18 percent of apartments had been covered, and the reduction for residential break-ins for the municipality as a whole was 32.9 percent.

"Operation Identification" has been an ongoing project with the Vancouver City Police since April 1976, and at the time of writing, organization is underway by the R.C.M. Police to do the same in the municipality of North Vancouver.

The police-sponsored "Operation Identification" project was based on four premises:

(a) that visual evidence of increased home security reduces the likelihood of theft;

(b) that police are more likely to increase return of stolen goods to owners;

(c) that convictions for theft are facilitated by such obvious proof of ownership; and

(d) that goods lose their appeal when freedom for resale is limited.

Police intend to monitor the frequency of marked goods showing up in arrests for theft and possession of stolen property and, after a reasonable period of time, the results should prove interesting.

In an attempt to gain some idea of how these projects might influence the relationship between burglars and their fences, two related questions were included in the fence

description form. The detectives having the most knowledge of each fence were asked, if possible, to express an opinion based upon known facts or reasonable circumstantial grounds and assuming that the stolen property involved was of a type that had the normal degree of risk for identification.

The first question was intended to assess the fence's degree of sensitivity to buying stolen items, regardless of geographical source, where identification by the victim was reasonably possible. Table II provides a resume of the answers.

From the fifty-six fences for which an opinion was available, there is evidence of a significant degree of caution on the part of the sample group. Sixty percent showed themselves to be from moderately to very sensitive about possible identification of stolen property.

Of the thirty-four fences who were assessed as being from moderate to very sensitive, nineteen have previous criminal convictions, a fact which could influence their cautious attitude. We could also speculate that a significant number of these more sensitive fences are by nature probably less greedy, aggressive and/or foolhardy than the twenty-two fences who are believed to exert little concern over possible identification of the stolen property they acquire.

In an attempt to determine more specifically how fences in the Metropolitan Vancouver region react to stolen

TABLE 11

Degree of Sensitivity By Sample Group of Consistent Fences to Possible Identification of Stolen Property

N=106

Degree	No. of Fences
Little	22
Moderately	16
Very	18
No Opinion	49
Not Applicable (coins/stamps)	1

merchandise acquired from a neighbourhood where a police sponsored property identification program had been conducted, a second more specifically worded question was included in the fence description form.

Table 12 indicates the likely reaction of fences to property stolen from a community covered by Operation Identification.

TABLE 12

N=106

	No. of Fences
No Reason to Believe He Would Refuse It	34
Some Reason To Believe He Would Refuse It	2
No Opinion	49
Not Applicable	21

The term "not applicable" relates to those fences who handle only stolen goods that would be outside the scope of such a program, such as building materials in quantity, livestock, motor vehicles and parts, or new goods stolen from warehouses and stores.

Of the thirty-four fences about whom there was no reason to believe they would refuse goods stolen from a neighbourhood which had been subjected to "Operation Identification," twenty-two had in the earlier question (Table 11) been assessed as moderately sensitive, or less, to possible identification of stolen property.

The willingness of a fence to accept stolen goods having an above-average risk of identification would be influenced by such factors as:

(a) his ability to negotiate a price which would make it worth the risk;

(b) his ability to erase or alter serial/identification numbers promptly;

(c) his facilities for transporting the items to a safer, distant geographical location, for example Alberta;

(d) the degree to which his fencing business depended financially upon a regular flow of such goods;

(e) how well he is known to the local police and, if he is a businessman-fence, whether they conduct lawful, periodic examinations of his merchandise and records.

When we consider the relatively high identifiability

rate shown in Table 4 and the systems used by the police to record identifiable stolen property, the fences have ample reason to be cautious. For example, all stolen items bearing an identification number can be recorded in the Canadian Police Information Centre (Ottawa) computer, which has terminals in all major police departments across Canada. In addition, the City of Vancouver Police Department, which is the largest in the British Columbia Lower Mainland, has an efficient stolen property recording system in its Second Hand Detail. This relatively small unit of five detectives and clerical support staff will undoubtedly increase in effectiveness with the spread of "Operation Identification" because it cards and files all items listed as lost or stolen in police reports, including some from police departments in surrounding municipalities. Comparisons are continually being made against these records of suspected stolen property which has come to the attention of the police by various means.

This Detail also monitors the official accountability system by enforcing the British Columbia Pawnbrokers Act and the City of Vancouver Second Hand Dealers Bylaw. Two detectives regularly inspect five pawnshops (one in New Westminster) and another checks major secondhand dealers. As of June 25, 1976 there were 134 licenced secondhand businesses in the City of Vancouver.[20] Unfortunately, the City of Vancouver Second Hand Dealers Bylaw has not been amended for over twenty-five years. Consequently, it lacks "teeth," in that the maximum penalty is a fine

[20]City of Vancouver records, 1976.

not exceeding one hundred dollars and costs.

One detective of the Second Hand Detail concentrates on determining if valuable items such as jewelry, coins, and antiques, in possession of a pawnshop or impounded by police have ever been reported stolen. In addition to the administration of the squad, the staff sergeant in charge is responsible for the registration of firearms and the custody of all impounded weapons.

3. Vulnerabilities

Although certain aspects of this report may create the impression that the redistribution of stolen property is a lucrative and thriving industry in the Metropolitan Vancouver region, it is certainly not impervious to efforts by law enforcement agencies. As mentioned earlier, during the period April 22 to September 5, 1976 a total of sixteen fences included in our sample were charged with possession of stolen property.

The fact that 65 percent of our fencing sample have at least one criminal conviction of some kind while several have lengthy records indicates that in addition to fencing, they are likely to be involved with other, more-easily-proven, unlawful activities on which the police could concentrate instead.

Table 11 indicates a concern for property identification that suggests a sensitive spot in the fencing industry which can be exploited. Perhaps the advantages given to the police by "Operation Identification" programs are already making themselves felt by sowing the seeds of

fear among some in the fencing community. Possibly by expanding and continuing these programs the police will be able to create such pressure that some of the less courtageous fences will feel their security threatened and will scale down their fencing activity as a result.

If the master list of fences which was compiled and distributed to twelve contributing Metropolitan Vancouver municipal police departments is made available to all appropriate detectives and uniformed members, and kept up-to-date by a designated agency, it should enable the police to react more quickly in significant theft and burglary cases by providing investigative leads as to fence suspects who may have received the stolen property from the perpetrator. By not having the usual advantageous time span in which to sell the stolen property, the vulnerability of the fence is increased.

Some fences rely heavily on juvenile thieves and burglars to provide them with stolen property. When these juveniles are apprehended they usually respond negatively to police questioning regarding the identity of their fence because under the current juvenile justice system they know they will be dealt with lightly, either in court or by the diversion method. When the approved new special detention facilities are built, and the courts are able to deal more firmly with juvenile delinquents, the current unco-operative attitude of these offenders may soften, to the detriment of the fence.

No elaboration is necessary on the use made of the telephone by most fences. Earlier in this report, under the heading "Fencing Industry Characteristics - Structure," a significant degree of co-operation between fences was noted. Such fences are vulnerable to electronic surveillance authorized by the federal Protection of Privacy Act.

Some fences rely entirely on other, what might be called, wholesale fences for their illegal merchandise. The police in the Metropolitan Vancouver area have demonstrated the ability to trace these connections in either direction and have "zeroed in" on the wholesaler fence whenever possible. Consequently, the minor fence is either included in the charge of conspiracy or, if he is lucky, he merely loses his source of supply and ceases fencing. Either way, his dependence on the wholesale fence makes him vulnerable.

Because of the competitive nature of the commercial industry, it is not uncommon for legitimate businessmen to learn the identity of retail or wholesale outlets which have the reputation for frequently offering merchandise at abnormal lower prices and where fencing of stolen property is suspected. By establishing friendly working relationships with well-placed merchants and businessmen of established integrity, police can obtain investigative leads on shady dealers and endeavour through other means to determine if they do have interaction with known criminals. Similarly, it was learned that investigators of the Insurance Crime

Prevention Bureaux also have their own reasons for suspecting certain businesses of handling high value stolen goods.

The very fact that the fence must deal with burglars and thieves to obtain stolen property also constitutes a vulnerability because, if they are subsequently arrested, personal circumstances may cause them to disclose the identity of their usual fence(s) in the hope that such co-operation will encourage leniency by the court if they are convicted of their current charge.[21]

Although fences in general, particularly in the City of Vancouver, may not be receiving their justified share of police attention, it is gratifying to find that they are being kept in mind and targeted whenever circumstances and resources permit. Based upon the long range outlook, the prospects of making an even greater impact on the Metropolitan Vancouver fencing industry are optimistic.

4. Current Status of Existing or Potential Anti-Fencing Resources

Before considering the final chapter on recommendations, it would be advantageous to consider the current situation relative to what is being done in the Metropolitan Vancouver region which will directly or indirectly prove detrimental to the fencing industry. The following are not in any order of importance.

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[21] Executive Summary, The Design of Anti-Fencing Strategies, Colorado State University. This study revealed that 83 percent of the fences known to the Denver police were identified through informants, the majority of whom were thieves.

POLICE GENERALLY

Depending upon the extent of fencing activity in their own geographical jurisdiction, each of the twelve municipal police departments involved in this study had their own ideas on how it should be controlled. Only the Vancouver City Police had a specific unit whose basic duty was the suppression of fencing. Because of its non-violent, low-profile nature, fencing stolen property is generally viewed as just another unlawful activity having no special priority. Most uniformed policemen will make the effort to submit a report regarding their own suspicions or an informant's allegation as to fencing acitivity, but meaningful investigations are usually conducted only by detectives in the General Investigation Section.

VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT BURGLARY SQUAD

Because of the close working relationship between burglars and fences, the City of Vancouver Police Department Burglary Squad has always had an interest in fences per se but on January 1, 1976, one sergeant and three detectives were specifically deployed to combat fences. Unfortunately, during 1976 the City of Vancouver had over 9,000 break-ins and due to the number of serious cases which required the special attention of the Burglary Squad it was frequently necessary to temporarily divert two of these detectives from their anti-fencing activities. Furthermore, because the Vancouver Police Department Detective Division lacked the necessary manpower support staff, coupled with the fact that the target must be eventually notified in compliance with the

Protection of Privacy Act, the use of electronic surveillance against major fences was discouraged. Although this unit, with some C.L.E.U. assistance, successfully terminated a major, well-organized burglary-fencing ring in April 1976, the aforementioned factor hindered efficiency and momentum. Consequently, the unit was unable to target business fences and dealt with independents during the balance of the year after which it was disbanded.

VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT SECOND HAND DETAIL

This office has the responsibility and facilities for matching up reported stolen property with recovered, suspected-stolen property. It also regularly inspects pawnshops and, when up to strength, checks major secondhand businesses for stolen goods.

VANCOUVER INTEGRATED INTELLIGENCE UNIT

On August 1, 1976 the V.I.I.U. deployed seven members for the specific purpose of developing intelligence on all known and alleged fences in the Metropolitan Vancouver region. The intention was to determine their importance, level of activity, method of operation, vulnerabilities, and to provide the information to the local police for possible law enforcement action.

POLICE-SPONSORED "OPERATION IDENTIFICATION AND HOME PROTECTION PROGRAM"

Implementation of this program is already underway in Burnaby, North Vancouver and Vancouver. It is expected to result in a higher recovery rate for stolen property and higher conviction rate for related offences.

CO-ORDINATED LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT, JOINT FORCES OPERATIONS

Although C.L.E.U. was established in April 1974 to combat organized crime and has more potential targets than its resources can cover, the Joint Forces Management Team does consider providing assistance in specific cases where the fence is of major calibre, is operating in more than one municipality and requires considerable resources with concentrated effort to produce effective results.

CO-ORDINATED LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT, POLICY ANALYSIS DIVISION

Contributions to anti-fencing between May 1 and December 31, 1976:

(1) Twenty copies of a publication entitled, Executive Summary, The Design of Anti-Fencing Strategies (December 1975), were provided gratis to police departments in the Metro Vancouver region.

(2) Nineteen copies of a booklet entitled, Cargo Theft and Organized Crime, A Deskbook for Management and Law Enforcement (October 1972), published by the United States Department of Justice, were provided gratis to police departments and other appropriate agenices in the Metro Vancouver region.

(3) Nineteen copies of the Master List of Fences: Metropolitan Vancouver Region (1976), which had been compiled during the course of the fencing study, were provided gratis to the thirteen contributing police departments, including the National Harbour Board Police. The original master copy was given to the Vancouver Integrated Intelligence Unit as it was

the most appropriate agency to control further dissemination, and, if such a decision was eventually made, to assume responsibility for periodic up-dating of the catalogue.

(4) Fifteen copies of the report entitled, Stolen Property and Its Redistribution in the Seattle Metropolitan Area (February 1975), by Dr. M.E. Walsh, were provided gratis to the National Harbours Board Police and twelve municipal or city police departments in the Metro Vancouver region.

(5) Copies of two manuals published by the State of Mexico, Governor's Organized Crime Prevention Commission entitled, Catch Ya' Later Man! and An Undercover Fencing Operation, were provided gratis to the Vancouver Integrated Intelligence Unit and to the C.L.E.U. Vancouver J.F.O.

(6) Copies of two hardcover books entitled, The Professional Fence, by Carl B. Clockars, and Crime Pays, by Thomas Plate were loaned to members of the Vancouver Police Department and V.I.I.U. Anti-Fencing Units.

Pending anti-fencing contributions for early 1977:

(1) Thirty copies of an anti-fencing manual entitled, Strategies for Combatting the Criminal Receiver of Stolen Goods, by Dr. M.E. Walsh, have been ordered for eventual free distribution to British Columbia police departments. This manual was financed by tne United States Department

of Justice, compiled with the assistance of sixteen law enforcement agencies and published in October, 1976. Its 158 pages provides detailed guidance under the following main headings:

Introduction - Why Go After The Fence?

Chapter 1 - The Fence of Stolen Goods as a Law Enforcement Target.

Chapter 2 - The Components of Action: Resources in Anti-Fencing Enforcement.

Conclusion - Going the Anti-Fencing Route, What Does It Mean?

(2) At the request of the C.L.E.U. Policy Analysis Division, the Criminal Law Division of the Ministry of the Attorney-General is currently preparing a paper on the law as it relates to fencing. When finished, copies will be provided to all municipal and city police departments in British Columbia as well as other appropriate agencies.

(3) Distribution of this report will be made to the Attorney-General, members of the C.L.E.U. Policy Board, all contributing police departments, and to whomever else those in authority deem appropriate.

(4) When distribution of the three foregoing items has been completed, the C.L.E.U. Policy Analysis Division intends to sponsor an anti-fencing seminar in Vancouver, British Columbia for the benefit of interested British Columbia police departments.

JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Various 1976 and 1977 reports and newspaper articles on the files leave no doubt that at the present time the Juvenile Justice System of British Columbia is in dire need of improvement. There are, however, indications that the Attorney-General fully appreciates the problem and has commenced remedial action. One of the most desperate needs is for proper special detention facilities that will cost in excess of $4 million and are expected to be built before the end of 1978. Other recommendations are also being reviewed by the Attorney-General and the Minister of Human Resources.

INSURANCE CRIME PREVENTION BUREAUX

When a fence is found in possession of high-value property believed stolen and the usual searches through the Canadian Police Information Centre, Vancouver Police Department Second Hand Detail, the local police records meet with negative results, the respective law enforcement agency could obtain further assistance in tracing the goods to the rightful owner by supplying the Insurance Crime Prevention Bureaux (Vancouver office) with a picture and detailed description of the article. At no extra cost to the submitting law enforcement agency, the I.C.P.B. will send copies of the description to all of its member insurance companies asking if, by virtue of an insurance claim on file, they are able to supply details as to when, where and from whom it was stolen.

IV. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE:

Based upon the existence of 106 "consistent" fences found operating at a particular point in time, and the fact that between $9 and $10 million worth of property suitable for fencing is stolen annually with a recovery rate of under 16%[22], it is contended that a significant fencing industry exists in the Metropolitan Vancouver region.

Police departments outside the City of Vancouver showed a relatively good knowledge of their local fences but seemed to leave them "simmering on the back burner" in favour of concentrating on specific, complaint-generated offences. Those detectives whose purview included the suppression of fences appreciated the fence's important relationship with local thieves, and had the desire to put them out of business but usually had difficulty finding the time and resources for the task unless they had a reliable, well-placed informant.

Nevertheless, with the added assistance of the V.I.I.U., the possibility of help from the C.L.E.U. J.F.O. in major cases, the further implementation of "Operation Identification" and the increasing appreciation of the fence's role in the criminal society, there is ample reason to believe that the police will find the motivation and capability to meet the challenge offered.

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[22] Based upon figures available from only three of the twelve participating municipal police departments, to wit: West Vancouver, New Westminster and Port Moody.

Although the Metropolitan Vancouver region has a population of over one million, it covers a relatively compact land area easily accessible in all corners by an efficient system of interconnecting highways. This enables a thief or burglar to commit his crime in one city or municipality and before the offence is discovered, to transport the stolen property by motor vehicle to a fence several miles away. This advantage is further compounded by the existence of twelve separate city or municipal police departments in the Metropolitan Vancouver region, each primarily concerned with crime in its own geographical area of jurisdiction. These advantages to the thief must be minimized by close co-operation between Metro Vancouver police departments in the prompt and continuous distribution of information relative to known or suspected fences and major thefts.

It is not within the terms of this report to advocate strategies for the suppression of fencing. In addition to having their own ideas on this subject, the police may find ample suggestions in the material already supplied to them and in the aforementioned anti-fencing manual which will be distributed in the near future. The following factors, however, are likely to have a positive effect in the overall anti-fencing program by reducing the current burglary/theft crime rate and in improving the morale of the detectives responsible for the investigation of these crimes and/or fencing specifically.

(1) Perhaps the most important step that can be taken in the area of property theft is a program of public education. Members of the general public have very little appreciation of the critical role played by the fence in the support and facilitation of the thief's activities. They fail to realize how, by their silence and apathy, the fence is able to operate more openly and successfully. Worse still, by patronizing the fence they are not only condoning and promoting burglaries, shoplifting, cargo thefts, car-prowls and thefts generally, but they are also causing several other consequences such as unhappiness, expense and inconvenience to the victims of such crimes, higher insurance premiums, higher prices of retailed goods and higher taxes to provide additional resources to the criminal justice system.

(2) It is recommended that both manufacturers and other commercial property owners, shipping in interprovincial commerce, be required to maintain systematic and individual records of the property contained in all such shipment. In this way we should be better able to trace and recover property stolen in transit or from transport facilities and learn the channels used by fences in the cargo theft area.

(3) Operation Identification and Home Security Program

All municipal and city police departments in the Metropolitan Vancouver region should be encouraged to implement this program at their earliest convenience.

(4) Vancouver Integrated Intelligence Unit

Because the movement of stolen property across police jurisdictional boundaries in the B. C. Lower Mainland is a significant and continuing problem for law enforcement agencies, consideration should be given to establishing a permanent regional anti-fencing section within the V.I.I.U.

(5) Co-ordinated Law Enforcement Unit, Vancouver Joint Forces Operations

Table 6 on page 54 illustrates that the majority of fences in our sample group exert a geographical influence covering at least the Metropolitan Vancouver region with its twelve separate municipalities. It is suggested that the suppression of fences should be viewed as a regional law enforcement problem and that the C.L.E.U. Vancouver Joint Force Operations establish a special team of investigators to concentrate solely on major fences.

(6) Vancouver Police Department

The Vancouver Police Department is in the process of decentralizing the detective division and implementing team policing in four separate districts. A consequence of this fragmentation could be a further reduction in its effectiveness to combat major fences and if the recommended C.L.E.U. Vancouver J.F.O. special anti-fencing enforcement team fails to materialize it is recommended that the Vancouver City Police establish its own anti-fencing unit to cover the entire city but which would operate in close co-operation with the detective units in the four districts.

(7) The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police should request the federal government to publish a Canadian version of the aforementioned American manual entitled, Strategies for Combatting the Criminal Receiver of Stolen Goods described on page 82. In addition to the tactical value of such a manual it could also serve to draw attention to the essential position of the fence in the theft industry and thereby motivate senior police management to give the fence a higher priority in their enforcement program.

(8) Assign to a suitable agency the ongoing responsibility of keeping the Metropolitan Vancouver Region Master List of Fences catalogue up-to-date with monthly written amendments to all users.

(9) The Law As It Relates to Fencing.

(a) The British Columbia Pawnbrokers Act should be updated by the Ministry of the Attorney-General, with consideration being given to the suggestions contained in correspondence dated March 7, 1977, from the Vancouver Police Department.

(b) The Vancouver Second Hand Dealer Bylaw No. 2807 should be updated by the City of Vancouver Legal Department in consultation with the police.

(c) The Criminal Law Division of the Ministry of the Attorney-General should examine the feasibility of enacting a new provincial statute similar to the Vancouver Second Hand Dealers Bylaw No. 2807.